

Linda Clair
Four-and-a-half-day Meditation Retreat
Cold Ash Retreat Centre, Newbury, UK
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Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 2b – Thursday morning guided meditation

Counting the breath can be a really good way of adding an extra anchor to the breath in the body. And it's good to use this technique at the beginning of a sitting, in the middle, sometimes for a whole session.

Many of you have probably practiced this before but I'll just go over it once more. Again, it's a very simple body-based practice. You breathe in through the nose and as you breathe out you silently count, "One," from the abdomen. It's important to keep the counting as body-based as possible; not to make it an intellectual exercise.

So you breathe in, "One." You breathe in, "Two." In, "Three." If you can get to ten without losing track of where you are go back to one again and repeat; just keep repeating. But it doesn't matter if you get lost at two, three, five. It's not a competition. It's just a way of adding an extra anchor. And you also start to see how easily you can be taken away by thinking.

It doesn't matter if you have the beginning of thoughts in between the numbers. But as soon as you lose track of where you are, go back to one again. It can be an incredibly deep practice. But at times it doesn't feel like that. It feels like you're not getting deeply into anything. But really you're not getting deeply into thinking.

I would say there's no depth in any thought. There's no creativity in any thought. Real creativity occurs when there's an absence of thinking. And that's what this practice leads to, pure creativity where nothing is copied; nothing is repeated. You can do the same action again and again and again but it's never the same. Don't make the mistake of trying to repeat anything. And don't see anything as a mistake.

So try the counting. When your mind is particularly busy it can be very effective. And be in your body.